

WRITTEN IN RED

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CHAPTER 1.—Story opens in office of North & Stackhouse, a Boston brokers' and bankers' concern. Directors of Nicaragua Midland and Stackhouse await North, who some days before had received letter threatening death. Search for North reveals his dead body at his unoccupied town home. Headline in red, in scrawl of red, is written "Stackhouse."

CHAPTER 2.—Officers, reporters and physicians investigate and perfume woman's handkerchief is found at entrance. Kingman F. Thomas, of Boston Globe, introduced.

CHAPTER 3.—Fetridge, friend of the firm, and Stackhouse engage Detective Lamm to probe murder, and each in private declares the other the criminal. Lamm goes to Swampscott, North's summer home.

CHAPTER 4.—Lamm hides in North's home, where Stackhouse, North's daughter, and Mrs. Stackhouse, North's wife, are. Accuse husband of murder. Stackhouse leaves home, wife faints.

CHAPTER 5.—Fetridge arrives at North home. Lamm interviews Mrs. Stackhouse, Fetridge and North butler, Marie Molest, known to both Fetridge and Stackhouse, connected with case.

CHAPTER 6.—Medical Examiner Jarrett reports view of case. Thomas interviews surgeon, autopsy, then confers with Lamm, who tells Fetridge connection with case.

CHAPTER 7.—Busy days at police office. Disclosed that Mrs. Stackhouse was North's adopted child. Inspector Appleby visits Stackhouse, pursuing love letter to Marion, mentioning blackmailer.

CHAPTER VIII.

APPLEBEE TAKEN BY SURPRISE.

The course of professional duty which brought Detective Lamm to Swampscott shore on Friday also brought to the North villa, on the day following, Mr. Kingman F. Thomas.

A young and timid gentleman, of many aspirations but too little confidence, had been deputed to call at the house for such news as might be attainable. But Moffett, in all his dignity—before he had looked at Mr. Lamm's warning figure—Moffett had repelled the novice newspaper work; and when Mr. Thomas reported himself for duty on Saturday morning, among the work to be deputed to him for the day was a visit to the North household at Swampscott.

Other newspaper duties so far encroached upon Mr. Thomas' time that it was not until evening that he took the train for Swampscott, and it was growing dark when he reached the house, which appeared almost deserted.

But Mr. Thomas' vigorous ring at the bell was answered by a pretty maid in mourning, to whom Mr. Thomas confided the fact that he was a friend of the late master of the house, and would be glad of the opportunity to see Miss Harwood.

Aunt Comfort in due time surged through the doorway of the reception-room, none too large to admit the comfortable passage of her portly form.

"This is Miss Harwood?" said Mr. Thomas.

"Yes, sir."

"Permit me to present myself. My name is Thomas. I have long known Mr. North in business circles; indeed, I may say that we met very frequently on social occasions also. Hearing of this sad event, I have called to offer my condolences, and to beg that, if my services in any capacity will be of value, you will do me the favor of putting them to the best use, though I know that, with Miss Harwood as head of the bereaved household, nothing has been left undone." This with a deferential bow.

"Thank you. Oh, thank you! A-h!"

"But I am confident that everything will be properly managed. There is Mr. Stackhouse."

"Oh, sir, you don't know. I couldn't say a word about the matter, not even to Mr. North's friend. But I will remark that circumstances have taken such a strange turn that Mr. Stackhouse will not be concerned in the funeral arrangements. The only gentleman who is doing anything is Mr. Fetridge—a friend of the family; and I am so overwrought and troubled by these terrible events, Mr.—Mr. (Thomas, thank you), that I hardly know whether to hope he can be of much service to us or not."

Mr. Thomas brought his most approved glance of sympathy to bear upon the good old lady.

"You must be calm and firm, madam," he suggested. "Remember that everything depends on you—the young ladies look to you, naturally, in a time like this."

"Ah-h-h!" ejaculated Aunt Comfort. "They are acting very strangely. Of course, I couldn't think of saying anything against them; for I love the poor girls, both of them; but I must say, sir, that it has been a trial to me to see how recklessly she has gone on here, without even listening to good advice."

"The effect of the sudden shock," hinted Mr. Thomas respectfully. "They need a little disinterested counsel, my dear madam. Now if I could only see them as their father's friend and have a little talk with the young ladies, I am sure they would see matters in their true light and realize what a blessing it is to have such a prop and stay as you in a time like this."

Aunt Comfort fortively wiped her eyes, as she again away back and forth shaking her head.

"You are very kind and thoughtful, Mr.—Mr. (Thomas, thank you)—and, you being a friend of their poor dead father, perhaps the girls will heed what you say. I would not think of allowing a stranger to see them. There were two callers here yesterday. One was a police detective. Perhaps he had a right to come. But the other was only an inquisitive inspector."

"And the young ladies?" Mr. Thomas ventured to hint after a respectful pause. "This Mr. Fetridge is known to them and to you, of course—he is a friend of the family?"

"Oh, dear me, yes, sir," was Aunt Comfort's reply. "He has been a frequent visitor here for—let me see, it must be three years at the very least—since we first made his acquaintance. There was a time when

he didn't come so much, and we thought perhaps there had been some disagreement between him and poor Mr. North. But he began to come again to the house, just as before. Yes, Mr. Fetridge has been very friendly with both our young ladies."

"I never heard Mr. North speak of Mr. Fetridge," said Thomas. "But you know him to be trustworthy and honorable that is certainly sufficient assurance."

"Thank you, Mr. Thomas. Here I have been keeping you from the ladies. I am sure they will be very ready to see a friend of their father. And I do hope they will hear what you have to say."

"I can advise them to no better course, my dear madam, than to follow your own good counsel," said the reporter as Aunt Comfort took her parting course toward the door.

Sitting in his chair he could easily follow Aunt Comfort's progress by her exclamations, partly natural, partly the result of her excitement of mind. As he waited her return, he thought, with pardonable self-complacency, on the facts which the good woman had disclosed, and wondered if it would be his good fortune to find the young North ladies half so ready to speak. He was aroused from his reflections by the re-appearance of Aunt Comfort at the door.

But Mr. Thomas had no thought for the excellent aunt after his eyes fell on her companions.

"This is Mrs.—I would say Mr. North's elder daughter," Aunt Comfort introduced Marion. "And this is Miss Stella, his younger child. My dear girls, this is a friend of your poor father, Mr. Thomas. He takes a deep interest in your welfare, and will only be too grateful, he says, if he can be of some service."

Mr. Thomas inwardly congratulated himself that he was a real and not simulated interest in the case, for he felt perfectly sure that the orbs of this blonde-haired, stately reserved woman would detect in an instant any pretense.

It was to Marion that he turned, but his thoughts, not less than his sympathies, were with her delicate, grief-stricken companion.

"I do not know that Mr. North had a single enemy in his business affairs," he began, "yet it seems plain that somehow or other he had gained the hostility of some person, and that person must have been concerned in this terrible crime."

"Just what the police detective said," Mr. Thomas interposed. "But if Mr. North had an enemy, it was certainly no one in this house."

She looked around for some words of confirmation, but Stella was still quietly crying, and Marion said nothing.

"Cannot you think of any person," resumed Mr. Thomas, "who might have had a grudge against your father? Any discharged employee?" He looked at Marion.

"Let me speak for my sister as well as myself, Mr. Thomas," declared Marion, rising. "We neither of us have any idea whatever to express as to the possible or probable guilt of anyone. We thank you for your offer of assistance, but will not trouble you further at this time. Come, Aunt Comfort. Good evening, sir."

The two young ladies had left the room, with Aunt Comfort in unwilling tow like some unwieldy, harmless barge, before Mr. Thomas realized that the conference was at an end. One pleasant association only he carried away with him, the charm of the presence of the younger girl, whose gentle inclination of the head as she looked at him just before leaving the room seemed to accentuate his feeling that here was a helpless, beautiful girl, who appealed to his sympathetic interest, and whom, if occasion should come, he would most gladly serve.

Mr. Thomas, as he wrote of the day's developments in the North case, graphically presented certain facts, but kept others, quite as important, untold. Among these undisclosed matters the name and standing of Richard Fetridge in the North household were included.

There is no "rest day" in the reporter's week. Sunday came and brought to Mr. Thomas new duties. In all the daily papers of Saturday this announcement had appeared:

"The funeral of the late Paul North will take place from his late residence, Swampscott, at three p. m. on Sunday, June 11. Relatives and friends invited without further notice. Burial private."

It is throng that pressed into the house of mourning, it would have taken attentive observation to single out Mr. Thomas. But he was there, given and returned, secured for him a place after his own heart, where he could see all and not be seen. From this point of vantage, Thomas looked over the assemblage quite at his leisure, and noted many a face familiar in State street and on 'Change.

Rather a young man in black, whom he remembered to have seen often, was escorted to a place of some prominence. He exchanged some whispered words with those in authority, and Mr. Thomas set him down, unhesitatingly, as Richard Fetridge. And Richard Fetridge it was, and none other.

Thornton Stackhouse, looking worn and almost haggard, appeared on the threshold of the great parlors. He had been looked for obviously, for he was at once approached by the master of ceremonies, with his mourning face, and escorted to the seat reserved for him not far from the family group.

By some potent influence, Mr. Thomas' eyes, as well as his thoughts, were turned toward these silent, motionless women. Once more, it was not Marion

but Stella who seemed to appeal to his heart. Once only he caught sight of her face, and its pathetic, frightened look again touched him nearly. "What would I not give," he thought, "for the opportunity to help that poor girl! How I wish it were in my power to give her courage and hope."

Miss Harwood sat with Marion and Stella on either side, closely veiled. No other relatives were present, for Paul North's only brother—a Chicago merchant—was abroad with his family.

As the sweet, mournful strains of the funeral anthem were heard, the searching eye of Mr. Thomas noted the presence, in a seat not far from the central group, of the worthy Inspector Applebee.

Mr. Thomas' mental surmise was quite correct. Inspector Applebee was there on business. But the outcome of that visit surprised no one more than the officer from police headquarters.

The brief service had ended; the assemblage rose respectfully to permit the special mourners to pass through the room; and Inspector Applebee found himself, directly before them as they went, followed by many a sympathetic look.

Aunt Comfort came a little in advance; and then the two orphaned girls, Stella walking on the side nearer to the watching inspector.

A subtle, delicate odor came to his sense as Stella stopped for a moment, so near that he might have touched her without lifting his arm—a faint, rare perfume.

Instantaneously the scent recalled a certain scene to the inspector's mind. His thoughts went from Paul North's villa at Swampscott to Paul North's town house in Marlboro street; and he seemed to find again, where it had lain overlooked in the master's house, a bit of filmy lace.

There could be no mistake, the inspector said to himself, outwardly impassive, but every nerve quivering with excitement.

With Stella North, almost as if it were a part of herself, came that faint, yet penetrating and subtle odor which Inspector Applebee had known in all his life but once before; when he was keeping watch in the house where Stella North's father lay, cold in death.

CHAPTER IX.

UNDER COVER OF THE NIGHT.

When the yellow state house dome next came into Reporter Thomas' view that Sunday after the funeral, he had gained a deal of information about the people at the North villa.

Quite naturally, one of the first places he sought was the quiet office of Detective Lamm.

The door being locked between them and possible intruders, Mr. Thomas began his disclosures.

"At the present time, Lamm," he said, giving the office chair a twist before sitting down in it, "there are two things which strike me as peculiar. There are two men in this case who naturally come under suspicion—one of them because he has no history; the other because his history is peculiar."

"And the man with no history is?" Thornton Stackhouse. You may or may not be aware of the fact that until he appeared in Boston ten years ago, he was unknown to anybody in these parts, and that of his earlier life there are only extant to-day the vaguest and most conflicting rumors. He never refers to anything in his life more than ten years old. So, as I say, he has no history."

"Um-hal!" said Lamm; "as you say, I may or may not have been aware of the fact. Well, then, as to the other man whose history is peculiar?"

"I referred, Lamm, to Mr. Richard Fetridge, the Apollo Belvidere of State street, the ideal killer, the man whose personal appearance is the principal thing about him which would at once strike an observer."

"And why does this man begin to appear suspicious to you?"

"Because I can't exactly understand his relations to the North family, nor his motives in his relations to them."

"Tell me what you know and I'll try to help you."

"From what people down at the shore gossip, it appears that Fetridge made the acquaintance of the Norths at Swampscott three years ago. The young man was boarding at some hotel, met the young ladies, seems to have been particularly struck with Marion, the elder daughter, and began to go to the house a good deal. People will talk, you know, and people said that Fetridge was dead in love with the girl, and probably might have married her but for old man North's opposition."

"Ah!" Mr. Lamm lit a new cigar. "Didn't like the young fellow, eh?"

"May have liked him well enough, but didn't want a man without money for a son-in-law," rejoined Thomas.

"But Marion was not his own daughter?"

"No. But he adopted her when she was a year old, and he had no expectation of having a child of his own; and North seemed to think as much of her after Stella came as before. Of course, one way of showing his liking was his anxiety to have Marion well married. And all the while, the old man, turned the cold shoulder to Fetridge, who was only a struggling lawyer, with nothing but his wits to depend on for a living. His visits to the house suddenly stopped. About two months after he ceased to call at the place, Marion North became Marion Stackhouse."

"There was plenty of gossip about that event at Swampscott, I'll be bound," was the detective's comment.

"Of course. Everybody said she married Stackhouse for money, although she was in love with the other fellow. Some people go so far as to say that Marion and Fetridge had some lovers' quarrel, with whom Marion was not on friendly terms. Other people, who did not hesitate to say that the young woman, being all the cool and calculating kind, agreed with her father that Stackhouse was a certainty and the young lawyer only a possibility so far as money interests were concerned."

"Fetridge is a rich man now," oracularly declared Mr. Lamm.

"Ah! If friend North had dreamed that in a few weeks Fetridge would fall heir to a very handsome property in Australia, I think our friend Stackhouse would have been dismissed for the lawyer. It was an uncle, I hear, that left Fetridge his fortune. Fetridge went to Australia to settle up the estate, as perhaps you know, not in the least expecting to get much of anything. But in nine months he came home, to everybody's surprise, himself included, a millionaire."

"Exactly, well?"

"Well, he began to feel drawn toward the Norths again. This time the old man was very glad to have him on good terms with the family. The almighty dollar, you know, I don't mean to slur a dead man's memory, but Paul North was a disciple of Mammon, if ever there was one in the world. The question in everybody's mouth is, how did Stackhouse attain his extraordinary influence over Paul North? I attribute it to his cunning catering to the old man's strongest passion—avarice. But not to digress. Fetridge visited the house regularly for a month or two, and it was gossiped down at the shore that the Apollo had turned his attention to Miss Stella. I am not at all certain as to the correctness of that assumption myself, Lamm."

"He may have something of his former liking for Marion, you mean?"

Mr. Lamm found an answering look from his co-worker that made a spoken response superfluous.

"Just about a month ago, Lamm, professional business called Fetridge away from Boston. At any rate that was the explanation given by the young lawyer, who appears to have entered into quite intimate relations with the firm of North & Stackhouse since he came back from Australia with his millions. A Water street man I saw at the funeral told me he believed Fetridge lacked the concern, and went away on some business connected with it."

"That's a mere guess," was the detective's comment. "We must try to get at the real cause for this trip. You do not imagine that any disagreement with the family or the firm could have been at the bottom of it?"

"There was no love lost between Stackhouse and Fetridge. The cause of their mutual dislike may or may not be hard to determine," said Thomas, in a meaning tone; "but I'm very certain, from what has taken place since Mr. North's death—Fetridge did not come back, you know, until two days before—that he is on quite as good a standing with the family as ever. The way in which he was trusted in the funeral arrangements shows that much, plainly enough."

Mr. Lamm knocked the ashes from his cigar, took a turn up the room, and coming back stopped in front of Thomas as he sat fingering his watch fob.

"There's a mystery about this man Fetridge," he said with emphasis. "What you have found out about him simply confirms my feeling, quite warranted by my own knowledge of the man and his circumstances, that Fetridge is a person to be very carefully watched. Mark my words, young man. The day you find out what secret is shared by Marion North-Stackhouse and Richard Fetridge will mark a great advance in the progress of this investigation."

When detective and reporter parted, after some further interchange of views, a certain line of policy was agreed upon. Richard Fetridge was to be kept constant in sight. For the going and coming of the young lawyer in the city, Mr. Lamm declared his purpose to follow account, while Mr. Thomas was to be the sentinel on duty at Swampscott.

It happened that he was passing the North estate a little before nine o'clock, and that just then the wind seized him to enter the broad gateway and have a look at the silent, gloomy mansion upon which the heavy pall of death and ill-fortune had visibly fallen. There might be something stirring—some face, some light, some whispered conversation, perhaps—or was it that the sweet, sad face of North's orphaned daughter still haunted him and lured him out of his path?

At all events it would not necessitate much of a delay, for the abiding place of Richard Fetridge was but a short distance beyond. At first sight it did not seem possible that he should gain anything by entering the grounds. There was not even a light visible from his standpoint on the driveway. It might have been, thought Mr. Thomas, some long abandoned ruin for all the semblance of life that could be seen about it.

He was turning away, when his attention was attracted by a noise close by him as of a window cautiously opened, and immediately after he became aware of the flutter of white skirts at a window in the second story. Instinctively he drew back into the bushes. The night was dark, but the phosphorescent gleam that was to distinguish objects even in a dark

landscape, enabled him to see that somebody had emerged from the window and was coming down a trellis covered way to the front wood work, the snapping of the frail wood work, the cracking of the vine that clung to it, and finally the precipitate, probably unintentional, drop to the ground, and the accompanying thud. But the figure gathered itself up quickly—came toward him—passed him—breathing with audible excitement.

It was a figure veiled and closely muffled in a long cloak—the figure of a woman.

"Is it one of the servants?" Thomas asked himself, as he observed her hurried steps until the gate was reached, her backward glance, as if hesitating for a moment whether to go on or to return, and then a quick, almost headlong flight directly up the street in the direction of Marblehead.

"She cannot be going to the town, at any rate, whoever she may be," was Mr. Thomas' mental comment. "Is she a thief or a servant? I shall make it my business to know more about the matter, at all events."

With a stealthy tread, quite as noiseless as that of the cloaked figure hurrying before him, Thomas followed the woman, keeping her as well in sight as the darkness would permit.

Regarding one point there could be no doubt in the watcher's mind. The fugitive knew the road she was taking, and followed it with a fixed purpose. Mr. Thomas began to find it a matter of some difficulty to keep her within view, especially as the thick foliage made the darkness in some places very black indeed. Suddenly the woman left the road, and ran across the lawn of a private estate.

Thomas hastened after her, expecting to see her enter at the servants' door. But, to his surprise, she avoided the house, and eventually came out upon the rocks behind it, overlooking the sea.

Utterly absorbed in what she has in mind," thought Thomas. "And going straight toward the water, too! I don't know much about this district, but I think there is a little point of rocks out yonder, just in the direction the woman is taking. What if the creature should have come to this lonely spot at night to end her life?"

Startled at the thought, the reporter made haste, so that in case of emergency he might be ready to act.

Nearer and nearer he approached the unknown wanderer. She stood still at last upon a rock that overhung the water that plashed monotonously along the long beach.

The night wind swayed the folds of her cloak as she remained there for a moment like a statue.

Suddenly, with a quick motion, the woman drew something from her breast, and cast it waterwards with all her strength. The effort seemed to

exhaust her, for she sank down a moment, clasping her hands before her face.

The weakness was only transient. With nervous hands she pulled the veil over her face and wrapped the long cloak closely around her. Almost headlong was the haste with which the figure turned toward the road again.

Looking neither to right nor left, she passed very near the man who had thus played the spy upon her. No frightened fawn, thought Thomas, could have run more fleetly, under the spell of any dread whatsoever.

For an instant the reporter was in a quandary. He desired to do two things at once—to follow the fleeting figure; to stop and investigate. He stood up, looking after her.

"Queer thing!" he thought. "She is not going back to the North villa; at least, not by the same route by which we have come. She continues on the road toward the Phillips Beach station. Can it be that this woman has been kept here in hiding, and is going away? Perhaps, if I hurry, I can still overtake her."

He stumbled hastily across the rocks to the place where she had stood when she threw the something, which had aroused his curiosity, toward the water. It was well-nigh a hopeless quest. He stood for a moment in the very attitude which he had seen her occupy, the lonesome swash of the sea in his ears, measuring the distance with his eye and trying to calculate the limit of her force. He walked down slowly in a straight line to the very edge of the water. The tide seemed very near the flood.

"Quite hopeless. Not a chance in a million," he said at once. "But if I mark the spot and the height of the tide, by daylight to-morrow I can investigate with possible chance of success."

He was looking about him for some subject by which to secure the necessary landmarks, when his glance was attracted to a glittering something on a point of rock about which the water flowed. Even as he looked a wave dashed over it, obscuring it for the time, only to leave it gleaming in a reflected light again as the dark element receded.

An astonished, incredulous stare! No, it could not be; yet it would pay

him to make sure!

He drew off his shoes and socks and prepared himself for the effort of investigation. A few cautious steps brought him so near that there could be no mistake. He uttered an involuntary cry, and, plunging forward, regardless of a thorough wetting from an unexpected wave, grasped the glistening object in his shaking hand.

It was a pistol!

CHAPTER X.

WHO IS SHE?

If Reporter Thomas had been previously curious about the identity of the fugitive from the North household, this curiosity had suddenly intensified into acute anxiety, now that he had discovered the nature of her mission to the water side. Rather than she should escape him at this moment he would willingly forfeit a month's salary. He felt the keen excitement of the man who finds himself on the verge of a momentous discovery.

Thrusting the pistol into his pocket, he hastened to assume his clothing, and, at the top of his speed, made up the road in the direction the woman had gone. He reached the Phillips Beach station, only to find it black and deserted. There was the solitary figure of a man crossing the open space near by. Thomas hastened to accost him.

"Has the last train gone, sir?" he inquired.

"Train!" echoed the man. "There is no train from here to-night. The train leaves from Swampscott station at 9:26. It's not a great way down the track, but I'm afraid it's too late," he added, looking at his watch.

A sudden thought came like an inspiration to the reporter.

"You didn't see a woman running down that track a moment or two ago, did you?"

"Why, yes," returned the man, evidently struck with the coincidence. "I did. She asked me the very same question you did, and started off in chase for the train, but it was a good ten minutes ago. The fact was, the whole thing struck me as so peculiar that I went after her a bit, but somehow she gave me the slip. I must say I never saw a woman who could get over the ground so fast."

Thomas waited to hear no more, but was off like an arrow down the dangerously dark road bed.

It was a fruitless chase. Entirely out of breath, he reached the Swampscott station just in time to see the doors closed. A man bearing a lantern eyed him curiously as he came upon the platform.

"Last train's gone," he said, curtly. "I know," said Mr. Thomas. "It's rather hard luck that of mine to-night. Fate's against me, sure. I had a mishap—a ducking, as you see; and what with one thing and another, I have been bailed every way. I wouldn't care, only that a lady was to meet me here and go to Boston with me in the train."

"Lady with a veil and long cloak?"

"Yes."

"She was on in the train without you, my friend. Sorry for you, but there's once chance that you may catch that horse car into Boston, by way of Lynn, if you hurry."

Mr. Thomas was perfectly aware of this fact, but he thanked the man with the lantern very gratefully and set out on a run for the corner indicated.

The car was passing just as he arrived, and Thomas went with it as it rattled its slow way into Boston—a slowness that was magnified a hundred fold by the reporter's keen impatience. He was anxious to examine the weapon of which he had so strangely become possessed, but he did not consider it prudent to do so until he was free from observation. The opportunity arrived at last under an electric light, in a quiet street in the city.

"Calliber?" he mentally commented. "Thirty-two! I thought as much. The old-fashioned four-barreled pepper-box of a kind in use before the war. Ah! Sharp's patent, 1859. Probably a remnant of North's younger days. Breed-loading, too. There's no aim to the thing at long range, but it's a deadly weapon in a hand-to-hand conflict. And it contains a long magazine. How do you get the magazine loaded thing open? Ah! by this little button above the trigger. So, so. Three full cartridges and one empty shell. The smut of the powder is still upon the muzzle. Recently fired, and not yet cleaned! Why, what fool could have taken so little pains to conceal a guilty fact?"

He hastily thrust the pistol from sight and drew a long breath. A coincidence was out of the question. He no longer doubted the importance of his discovery. Luck—or was it fate?—had strangely favored him.

By this time Mr. Thomas had reached the borders of the district where life is stirring, night as well as day.

It was late, but not so late that the hackmen, always inclined to social propinquity, were not still to be found in their accustomed haunts.

By all the groups gathered in smoky "all night" restaurants, or talking over the merits and demerits of their respective teams, Thomas was welcomed as a friend of long standing.

He took their chaffing about the outward and visible signs of his wetting with characteristic good-humor; and between repartees that brought a broad grin to the faces of his associates, managed to introduce certain terse questions as to the matter in hand.

"Eastern depot? Why, Big Jim had a fare from there to-night. Here, Big Jim, leave off your palaver with the dames at that table a moment and come and see Thomas!"

Obedient to the summons, with ready good-will, Big Jim nodded to the reporter, and was presently seated with him at a conference carried on by both parties in an undertone.

"The fare was a woman, Thomas."

"A woman is what I'm looking for."

"Well, this one was so wrapped up I couldn't make much of her looks; but I will say this, she wasn't old, and she was scared at something or other almost to death."

"Where did you take her, Jim?"